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FUGITIVES FROM COMMUNISM

by Eugene Lyons

Most American discussion of the problem of displaced persons, whether before Congressional committees or women's clubs, has been misinformed, narrow and above all politically obtuse. It has swung between social work, sentimentality and sordid xenophobia. In consequence the country has missed both the deeper moral and political implications of the refusal of great numbers of Russians and East Europeans to return to their native lands, despite endless threats, pressures and inducements.

The whole issue has been bemoaned -- sometimes in a spirit of Christian sympathy, more often in ill-tempered annoyance -- as an unmitigated headache. Few have discerned that the D.P. problem is in fact a portent of hope in a period of cynicism and pervasive despair.

Secretary of State Marshall did touch on the political essence of the matter on July 16, in testifying for the abortive Stratton bill to admit a substantial number of refugees to the United States. The displaced persons, he warned, would be a constant source of "international friction" as long as they remained homeless. The nature of the friction was clear enough from his reference to the continuing Soviet "demand that we forcibly repatriate the D.Ps."

President Truman was even more explicit in his special message to Congress on the same subject on July 7. He described the displaced persons as "people who oppose totalitarian rule," people with "burning faith in the principles of freedom and democracy" who "have staunchly resisted all efforts to induce them to return to Communist-controlled areas." In effect he thus identified them not only as political refugees but also as our ardent allies in the struggle between freedom and dictatorship.

On August 19 the President pushed further to alleviate what he defined as the "tragic plight" of displaced persons. He then moved the former Commissioner of Immigration, Mr. Ugo Carusi, to a new State Department office where the handling of "all phases" of the D.P. problem will be concentrated.

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In spite of Presidential concern, however, some of the efforts to drive these people back to slavery have been made, in contempt of political common sense, by our own military and relief officials. Another bloody installment of forced repatriation of Russian refugees, by American and British authorities, was briefly reported from Italy in June.

II

Such tragic episodes have been possible only because our thinking on displaced persons has been concerned almost exclusively with the dark side of the picture: the burden of caring for the uprooted hordes and finding them new homes. There is a bright side, and the solution of the problem will be more likely when this is more generally noted and understood. The dictates of political self-interest may then get results where appeals to charity and to the tradition of political asylum have failed.

Since the German capitulation some seven million displaced persons have been repatriated to Stalin's side of the iron curtain. Many, perhaps most, of those who are said to have gone voluntarily did so only because they could not bring themselves to expose their families at home to totalitarian reprisals; or because they lacked the courage to face a hunted, humiliating existence as the unwanted guests of the democratic nations.

Those remaining in D.P. camps or in hiding are estimated by relief organizations to number 1,200,000. At least half a million of these are refugees from the Soviet Union proper, another 250,000 are fugitives from the three Baltic republics absorbed by Russia. Just now the Hungarian, Romanian and Czechoslovak contingents are growing rapidly and other additions may be expected with the tightening of Moscow's stranglehold on its sphere of control.

These voluntary exiles represent the uncompromising residue remaining after more than two years of endeavor to drive them back. Had the choice been remotely free, several times as many refugees would unquestionably have remained abroad. The 1,200,000 represent only the most conscious, principled and obdurate opposition to the Soviet regime. The mass suicides touched off by every new attempt at coerced repatriation are proof enough that these fugitives from Communism prefer death to existence as totalitarian subjects.

Some, undoubtedly, chose not to return in sheer terror of what awaited them at the hands of the Soviet police. But the overwhelming majority are prompted by intense moral and political preferences. They made a deliberate renunciation of the Soviet way of life, based on direct, personal and often lifelong experience of what it offers.

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III

I have read scores of individual and group declarations, especially by Soviet Russian nyevozvrashchentzi -- "non-returners," as they call themselves. They are written from the heart and attest a great hunger for freedom, for the simple human dignity denied by the police State. A girl, born and raised under the Soviet regime, writes:

> "I am proud of my present status as a Russian emigree. I feel that by refusing to return to the land of Stalin's autocracy I have become morally purer."

A former lieutenant in the Red Army Medical Corps writes:

> "I have refused to return to the U.S.S.R. not because of personal fear, but because I have become an enemy of the regime."

A Leningrad worker whose long statement is before me explains:

> "I have been torn away from my country by circumstances independent of my will. But since I have been in Europe and learned the true meaning of freedom, I shall never return to my country, whatever my fate may be, before it is freed from Stalin's tyranny."

In reading these documents one senses, too, their homesickness; their dedication to the hope of a Russia liberated from its totalitarian yoke. "When the hour strikes," says one declaration, "everyone of us voluntary exiles will be ready to serve the cause of the Russian people and perform his duty with honor." A group statement declares, "The people of Russia will have their say one day; and as long as their mouths are closed by force, we will talk for them."

It may be noted, for Congressional xenophobes, that less than 20 per cent of the refugees are Jews, and that most of these, in the final analysis, are also fugitives from Communism.

Lenin once said that by mass desertions Russian soldiers in 1917 "voted with their feet" against war. The non-returners have voted with their feet against the Stalin system. The size of the vote must be judged not in relation to the total populations behind the iron curtain, but in relation to the relatively tiny minority that found itself, through the accidents of war, beyond the reach of Soviet power.

As a kind of "Gallup poll" of Russian and East European sentiment on Soviet totalitarianism the 1,200,000 D.Ps. are therefore impressive and heartening. They attest the fundamental political health of the people trapped by the Soviet dictatorship. They offer the living, suffering proof that a huge segment, perhaps the majority of their countrymen, would vote for freedom against dictatorship if they, too, had the chance.

IV

Russian refugees of the 1917-21 generation were drawn almost entirely from the expropriated upper and middle classes. They were untypical of the great mass of people. The present refugees, by con-

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trast, are wholly representative of the populations at home. They include all types, from Communist officials to lowly peasants, from privates to generals. More than half of them are manual and office workers, 25 per cent are farmers and lumbermen, only 11 per cent are professional people. This unplanned "Gallup poll," in other words, has tested a true cross-section of the Soviet-dominated peoples.

Moreover, it was not a hankering for the economic fleshpots of capitalism that determined the choice. In giving up their homes, families, friends and careers, not many of the non-returners had any illusions about what awaited them. They knew they would be penned up in camps like cattle or would lead the hard lives of outlaws. They knew they would be destitute, resented, misunderstood, pushed around and subjected to relentless Soviet persecution, even unto man-hunts and kidnappings.

From her place of concealment a Russian woman, speaking of her own and her husband's refusal to return, ends on this note:

> "It was a hard and mortifying decision we had to make. But we decided to become refugees. We knew that we would be badgered and hunted like beasts. We also knew that everyone would denounce us to Stalin's agents. Yet we hoped that one day the Allies would understand. . . ."

The bright side of the D.P. picture has been largely ignored. It offers the assurance that in the conflict between the "two worlds," the mass of peoples in the Soviet totalitarian hemisphere are potentially on our side. Whether that potential can be transformed into a practical leverage for freedom depends primarily on our own clarity of mind and firmness of purpose.

The whole phenomenon of the political refugees serves as a warning that we make a disastrous mistake when we fail to distinguish between the Soviet regime and its terrorized subjects. This is the central point of a collective declaration by a group of Soviet non-returners addressed to the rulers of the Kremlin:

> "We wish to explain that the peoples of Russia have nothing to do with <u>your</u> plans for expansion, <u>your</u> enslavement of other nations, <u>your</u> misuse of religion for the attainment of <u>your</u> goal."

Eugene Lyons, a native of Russia and lifelong student of its people, is the author, among other books, of <u>Assignment in Utopia</u>.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. IV, NO. 35

By Frank C. Hanighen August 27, 1947

To say that the Government is worried about the Greek situation is an understatement. American ability to influence the course of events in that unhappy country is facing a test in the Greek Cabinet crisis and failure would have repercussions elsewhere in the Balkans, as well as the rest of the world. The demarches to Russia about the sentencing of Nicola Petkov, Bulgarian opposition leader, may prove futile, but they were made very much in earnest. The execution of Petkov would be a blow to American prestige in the Balkans. Indeed it is probable that Russia has deliberately staged the Petkov affair to show the Balkan peoples that "America can do nothing for you."

The fall of the Maximos Government in Greece arose from withdrawal of liberal elements from the Cabinet, largely in protest against the failure of the Government to restore order, or at least to diminish the prevailing disorder. Conditions have worsened in recent months and popular feeling against Royalist "tyranny" has grown as it once rose against "Leftist terror." The new U. S. mission under former Governor Dwight Griswold is not regarded as sufficiently versed in Greek politics to be of assistance in the present crisis. The State Department favors Sophoulis, Liberal leader, who is old and has little parliamentary support. Some quarters fear that Russia will choose this opportunity to have Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania and Albania recognize the guerrilla "free Greek government" of Markos. Such a step would indeed create a situation at Lake Success. Can one Member of the United Nations recognize a rebel government in territory of another Member of UN?

Our defense chiefs are especially concerned. American Legion Commander Griffiths has called for the dispatch of American troops to Greece. But military observers wonder if an adequate number could reach that country in time. Russian military formations have been reported across the border in Bulgaria. Indeed, some military circles have talked of the possibility of withdrawal from Greece. Such an action is not seriously considered, but it is significant of the seriousness of the situation that it is talked about.

* * * * *

There is one topic, lively among political fans, rarely mentioned in the discreet press. Senator Wagner of New York has long been seriously ill and may never return to Capitol Hill. His condition was so grave two months ago that he could not participate in the fight over the Labor bill, the one measure in which he has a primary interest. Unless he mends, he may resign his post. In that case, Governor Dewey would appoint his successor.

Dewey will then be strongly urged, for cogent political reasons, to name a Roman Catholic. The situation in the campaign of last year is recalled. When the Republicans were forming their slate, they tried (as usual) to balance the ticket among various racial and religious groups, as well as geographically -- "up-state" and "New York City area." As they were about to complete their slate, they realized that there were gaps -- no Catholic, no ex-service man on the roster. They had yet to select a candidate for U.S. Senator. At that moment, there started a boom for General "Wild Bill" Donovan, who is a Catholic, a famous "G.I." and an "up-state" man. Dewey's friends sought to head off Donovan by proposing another Catholic, General Hugh Drum. In the end, the Dewey forces decided not to name a Catholic because Wagner, incumbent Senator, had been recently converted to that faith. Choice of a Catholic might result in both Senators from New York being of that denomination -- a situation as embarrassing to the Catholic Church as it would be irritating to Protestant elements.

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If Wagner should resign, that situation would not exist. The inclination to "balance" by appointing a Catholic would be strong. Dewey and his advisers well know that the Republican upsurge last fall was in part attributed to support of that great segment of the constituency. It was a realistic protest against appeasement of Communists; and it operated not only in New York but in other urban areas.

If then Dewey should decide to name a man of the Catholic faith, who would it be? So stubbornly did the New York Governor avoid approval of Donovan that it seems hardly likely that he has changed his mind. It appears much more probable that he would turn to Mr. Thomas J. Curran, of New York City, a prominent Catholic, high in Republican circles and in the New York bar. Dewey appointed Curran to be his Secretary of State in Albany in 1943. A year later, Curran was Dewey's choice to oppose Wagner in the Senatorial race of that year; Wagner won. Curran is also Chairman of his own Republican County Committee.

Again, it might not after all be a Catholic. There is a school of thought which believes that Dewey would name John Foster Dulles. As may be recalled, Dulles was Dewey's foreign policy adviser in the 1944 campaign; he was the Governor's liaison man with the Roosevelt regime's foreign policy, and again with Truman's; and he has gathered much experience in the past few years in international conferences. He has ceased to be an active partner in the law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell. If he were in the Senate, Vandenberg would be in a better position to utilize his abilities. And he would then become automatically a delegate-at-large to the 1948 Republican Convention where he would probably be assigned to the Committee on Resolutions to shape the plank on foreign relations. Indeed, should the foreign situation be strongly to the fore if and when Wagner retires, then the possibility of Dulles' appointment to the Senate would surely increase.

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Nine out of the twelve jury members in the recent case of Carl Marzani, former State Department official tried for concealing his Communist affiliations, were negroes. In the trial of Eugene Dennis, Communist Party head, six negroes served on the jury; and the same number in the case of Gerhard Eisler, German Communist. Lawyers for the defense artfully emphasized racial and minority discrimination in their questioning and arguments. Despite these appeals to prejudice, it is a noteworthy fact -- the subject of much comment in the Capital -- that all these juries, and rather promptly at that, turned in verdicts against the defendants.

Now, it is possible that the negroes on these juries resented the court strategy of the defense attorneys. Be that as it may. It is probable that the negroes, just like their white brothers in the box, simply performed their duty to the best of their ability. In any case, the verdicts show how insignificant has been the influence on our negro citizens of a Party which sought deliberately to create racial dissension and planned for the eventual establishment of a negro republic in the South.

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General Wedemeyer's statement on the China situation (August 24) comes as a surprise to many who are unfamiliar with conditions in that country. The General had long been regarded as a staunch friend of the Nationalist Government, in contrast to other American officials, and as a consistent critic of the Chinese Communists. His utterance last Sunday, which contained references to the corruption and inefficiency of the Chiang Kai-shek regime, came as a shock to many friends of that regime. The text of the statement shows that the General has not changed his preference, for he did not speak well of the Communists. But his emphasis on the

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Nationalist Government's shortcomings actually expressed the feelings of many Chinese friends of Nanking. The following letter from one of these well-wishers not only reinforces Wedemeyer's attitude, but throws light on the confused, despairing mood now so prevalent in that country:

"The prospect for China is not too bright with internal strife going on. I wonder if the American Government is not backing up the wrong horse. There is nothing in the world I hate more than Communism. Is the Kuomintang anything better? There is not much protection for the individual here. The Shanghai authorities refused to honor the Habeas Corpus of its own court. The only language the Kuomintang understands is that of big guns and money. Although we have a total mobilization order, I doubt if it has the hearty support of the people. I think the powers that be in Nanking will find it different from the time when we resisted the Japanese; then the people suffered much without grumbling.

"But the Chinese, like the British, will muddle through. Some people here are scared that a showdown will come soon between the U.S. and the Soviets. I, for one, do not believe that the Russians can put up much of a fight, considering the fact that the European part of the country has been badly devastated by the Germans. Besides, everybody is sick of war. It is time the Russian bluff should be called. During World Wars I and II, much blood was shed. It certainly shakes our faith in Christianity, in fact, in any religion."

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Benedetto Croce, the great philosopher, eloquently assails the Italian peace treaty: "The Allies should not have asked the Italians to ratify their peace treaty. Italian approval -- meaning approval by the Italian people -- is impossible. . . . The Allied document has provoked in us grave doubts . . . for the way in which it would re-establish international collaboration for the good of civilization and to prevent, as far as possible, recurrent wars. Italy, according to the Allied technique, might participate in this new international order after it had completed its expiation, purging and purification by approving the diktat. But we ask: How can such collaboration be possible if the main prerequisite -- that a people keep its dignity and legitimate self-pride -- is ignored?

"Wise men of the big three or big four, just look at Italy: As soon as it was possible, Italy shook the tyranny which had held it in chains. You then accepted and favored its participation in the final phase of the war against Germany. Then, willfully, you excluded it from those peace negotiations involving its most vital interest, preventing it from voicing its case. Thus, you reduced Italy's army to little more than an internal police force and you divided among you that very navy that had fought with you and for you. You opened its frontiers and forbade it to set up defenses, and you tore away Italian populations despite the pledges of the Atlantic Charter. You took away its colonies or asked it to renounce them. You imposed reparations on people who had been greatly benefited by its domination and, finally, you sliced off pieces of territory in the West which had been Italy's for centuries. This with the pretext of creating guarantees against armed aggression, guarantees which even the strongly fortified Maginot Line did not in effect provide. We Italians, then, cannot accept this document for its plan of international relationships."

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Understatement Department ---- "After all, the Soviet Union has a seamy side." From a review of Victor Kravchenko's I Chose Freedom in the British Leftist weekly, the New Statesman and Nation (July 19).

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Book Events

Tito's Imperial Communism, by Reuben H. Markham. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press. $4.00

The great excitement occasioned by the report on religious freedom in Yugoslavia, by the seven Protestant clergymen who lately returned from a visit to that country, has naturally heightened the anticipatory interest in Reuben H. Markham's book, called Tito's Imperial Communism, which is to be published next week by the University of North Carolina Press. Much of this interest is due to the fact that the testimony of Mr. Markham, who went to the Balkans more than thirty years ago as a Congregational missionary and remained there as a newspaper correspondent, is utterly at odds with the testimony of the seven clerics. Not only is there no religious freedom under the regime of Marshal Tito, says Mr. Markham; there is no freedom of any kind, even within the Communist Party itself. Yugoslavia, he insists, is ruled by a ruthless, daring and fanatical oligarchy which in turn is ruled by the Politbureau at Moscow. In short, Mr. Markham appears to confirm the angry assertion of the Orthodox Bishop of Dalmatia, now in exile, that the country has become "a dungeon in which none dares say what he thinks," and where "all are pushed into a forced atheism."

This Mr. Markham is by every account a remarkable fellow, fluent in a half dozen Slavic dialects, at one time editor of a newspaper in the Bulgarian language, and credited with having acquaintances in almost every Balkan village. Certainly he seems to understand as well as anybody, including Miss Rebecca West, the intricate national and religious hatreds that have been seething, and at intervals exploding, in the Balkans throughout five hundred years -- hatred between Christians and Moslems, hatred between Christians who cross themselves from right to left and those who do it from left to right, and he writes about them all with a sympathetic impartiality. But now, he says, a new fanaticism and an even fiercer hatred have appeared, and those who share them are determined to crush all churches in order to obtain full mastery over the minds of the young.

The first quarter of Mr. Markham's book is the uneasy history of the nation which the Versailles peacemakers fashioned out of such disharmonious fragments of the Hapsburg imperium. Mr. Markham describes Hitler's terrible bombardment of Belgrade, the ferocious massacres by the Germans and by the Croat Utasha, the organization of the Chetniks by Mihailovitch, the emergence of Moscow-trained Croat Communist, Josep Broz-Tito, and the civil war that presently developed between the forces of these two guerrilla leaders. The dominant question in this conflict, which quickly transcended the struggle against the Nazis, was, Mr. Markham says, purely one of Communism and anti-Communism. In the end the issue was decided by Winston Churchill, and Tito's victory was assured by Allied arms and American lend-lease supplies.

The breach between the Allies and Mihailovitch, and the adoption of Tito by the British and American military leaders, grew out of the refusal of the Chetnik leader to carry out the peremptory orders of the High Command at Cairo. An effort by Mihailovitch to comply with these orders would, Mr. Markham tells us, have meant the virtual extermination by the Nazis of the already heavily depleted Serbian population. Thereafter the British and American forces became unwitting but highly zealous assistants to Tito in his war against the Serbs and in his march to dictatorship. On Easter Sunday, 1944, on instructions supplied by the Partisan headquarters, American bombers attacked Belgrade and the frightful hecatombs of Palm Sunday, 1944, were repeated. In the end to be sure Mr. Churchill became alarmed about the mischievous jinni he had set loose in Southern Europe, but there was no way then to conjure him back into the diplomatic bottle. -- J. M. Lalley

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